Coping with COVID-19 –for people with Addison’s Disease

## **National Online Meeting,** Sunday 28 June 2020

The first national online discussion for our members was held on Sunday 28 June, with a focus on coping with COVID-19. The meeting attracted 33 members and we were fortunate to hear from Dr Laura Vogl, a Clinical Psychologist, who shared her personal experience of contracting and recovering from COVID-19 with Addison’s Disease. During the one-hour session Laura shared practical tips about staying safe and coping with concerns and anxiety.

Other members contributed ideas and suggestions for staying safe.

This session was recorded, and you can watch the video here <https://youtu.be/OGNlVgEwS20>

We thank Dr Vogl for her time and observations, with appreciation shared by those who attended.

### LAURA’S STORY

Laura shared her experience of contracting COVID 19 in late March 2020, which led to her being hospitalised for three days with a mild case of the virus. Her symptoms matched what we now know of COVID-19, including fatigue, loss of smell and taste, breathlessness and a high temperature.

Once she started feeling ill Laura tripled her dose of medications for Addison’s, and whilst in hospital was on intravenous steroids, and she continued the triple dose for 4 weeks based on how she was feeling. It took a further few weeks to reduce back to her normal dose. The fatigue can linger as well as other side effects (like chilblains in feet)

Laura’s experience of the health system (in NSW) was very positive and hospitals are geared up to cope and were very attentive to her condition.

Addison’s is not known to increase your risk of catching COVID-19 but careful management is required if you contract the virus.

TIPS

* Have a thermometer available – and if your temperature rises, go to hospital
* When seeking medical care, be prepared with your health plan, list of medications and clearly tell people of your condition(s)

### COPING WITH STAYING SAFE

As a Clinical Psychologist, Dr Vogl then spoke of coping with the pandemic lockdown and anxieties that can arise. She noted that others may not understand your weaker immune system and if you feel comfortable you should share this information. It can help to be clear with others that our condition means we might have a more complex and difficult experience if we catch COVID-19. As Laura commented we are” all on the same sea but in different boats” but not everyone would know.

KEY POINTS:

* It is normal to feel anxious but not to be terrified. Remember that the media tends to show you the worst and if you are feeling overwhelmed reduce your media exposure.
* Test your response with what is “normal” in your area and try to find a new way of getting to expand your boundaries a little to get closer to “normal”
* Stay safe and practice all social distancing and avoid peak times and crowds
* There is a human need for social contact but smile and wave
* If you are isolating, add variety to your day, try to do something different
* Go for a walk, keep fit and exercise if you can, but don’t pat other people’s pets, nor allow them to pat yours
* Make the effort to stay in contact with family and/or friends
* Breathe – try to “be in the moment” and not worry beyond what you can control
* Seek professional help if you are feeling you are in a crisis and need support.

### OTHER STRATEGIES SHARED

* Wear a mask – it’s a visual reminder to others and they are likely to give you more space
* Gloves can be a false sense of security unless you are trained in their use. Instead be thorough in your handwashing and use wipes for surfaces you might touch, like handles of a shopping trolley.
* Have a laminated sign at your front entrance that makes it clear “a person with compromised immunity lives here” – and be clear if you don’t want any contact
* Clean your garbage bin if it is handled by people
* Consider a decontamination area at the entry to your home, where you can transition from outside exposure to inside – sanitiser wipes, clean clothes.